

**THE SOCIALIST PARTY
of Gt. Britain**

**REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 81st ANNUAL CONFERENCE
HELD ON 5th, 6th and 7th APRIL 1985**

(To be read in conjunction with the EC Report to Conference and the Final Agenda)

ATTENDANCES:	<u>No. of Branches Represented</u>	<u>No. of Delegates Sitting</u>	<u>Branches not Represented</u>
Friday 5 April 10.40 a.m.	16	34	Birmingham Bolton South Yorkshire
Friday 5 April 3.40 p.m.	17	43	Birmingham South Yorkshire
Saturday, 6 April 1.50 p.m.	17	33	Birmingham Edinburgh
Sunday, 7 April 11.55 a.m.	18	39	Birmingham
Sunday, 7 April 2.30 p.m.	18	43	Enfield & Haringey

Financial Report:

<u>Income</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>£</u>
Collections: Friday	68.49	Hall Hire etc.	490.22
Saturday	64.61	Delegates' Expenses	248.00
Sunday	77.16	Canteen Purchases	99.09
Additional donations	52.00		
Canteen takings	<u>168.92</u>		
Total Income	<u>431.18</u>	Total Expenditure	<u>837.31</u>
Book Sales	87.35		
Literature Sales	<u>99.90</u>		
Total	<u>£187.25</u>		

FRIDAY:

Com. H. Valor (Glasgow) was elected to the Chair and it was agreed not to elect a Vice-Chair. It was also agreed that Standing Orders Committee act as Tellers.

Bournemouth Branch, formed within the previous six months, requested permission to sit and this was agreed on the motion of Hopwood (S.W. London) and Coleman (Islington).

Birmingham Branch wrote re late Form 'C' which was due to difficulty in getting a quorum and asked permission to sit. However no delegate had yet arrived.

Guildford Branch explained why their Form 'C' was submitted late. This was due to some confusion in the Branch. It was agreed that Guildford might sit.

North East Branch: This is a new branch formed from the Newcastle Group and the Sunderland Branch, and they were also given permission to sit.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

Lestor (Camden): Branch concerned that the three items rejected by the Standing Orders Committee as out of order had been placed on the Agenda as Items for Discussion contrary to last year's instructed resolution.

L. Cox (S.O. Committee): Committee felt it advisable to reproduce these so that branches could judge whether committee acted correctly, and as an opportunity for the branches concerned to raise the matter if they wished. It might have been an error of judgment to place them under Items for Discussion.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: Hopwood and Speiss (S.W. London): "Delegates support the action of the S.O. Committee in rejecting these amendments, which contradict the original resolutions, in accordance with Annual Conference 1984 resolution, but suggest they should have been shown separately at the end of the Agenda and not as items for discussion."

ADDENDUM: May and Davies (N.W. London): "and that these items not be discussed at Conference."

ADDENDUM CARRIED 19-8; SUB-RESOLUTION CARRIED 21-7

FLOOR RESOLUTION: Howell and Floyd (Guildford): "That this Conference agrees that the amendment to Clause 2 (Enfield & Haringey Branch) of Resolution 1(b) be removed from the Agenda."

The Chair ruled the resolution out of order.

AMENDMENTS TO RULE:

RULE 12 (Enfield & Haringey):

Howell (Guildford): Highly premature to re-amend the size of the EC - it should have a reasonable period.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Branch opposed reducing the number to 10 because it restricts representation - few Branches able to be represented. We would support idea of future ECs consisting of General Secretary, Treasurer and 12 other EC members.

R. Smith (Islington): Last year's resolution should run its course. Does not follow that greater number of EC members will get through more work. There is a lack of volunteers who can go on committees - members should bear this in mind.

General Secretary: Last year with 12 members there were two occasions when we could not get a quorum. It will be more difficult during holiday periods with 10 members.

D'Arcy (Camden): 10 members of the EC include 2 officials which curtails their activity to some extent on the EC. Last year's argument was to get more people to stand but this year 2 members were voted off.

AMENDMENT TO RULE 12 CARRIED 26-17

AMENDMENT TO RULE 13 CARRIED 30-12

RULE 17 (Enfield & Haringey):

Gibbs (Enfield & Haringey): This is to make clear that the EC fully consults branches - it does not alter the meaning of the rule.

D'Arcy (Camden): It makes the rule more restrictive as although branches nominate, the EC also has a right to appoint immediately.

Kilgallon (North East): Waste of time putting items like this on the agenda when the meaning is quite clear and there are more important things to discuss.

L. Cox (EC): If enough nominations come from branches this problem would not

have occurred.

AMENDMENT TO RULE 17 LOST 16-19

EC REPORT TO CONFERENCE with relevant Resolutions/Items for Discussion:

CENTRAL ORGANISER'S REPORT:

D'Arcy (Camden): re relating more clearly to problems faced by the working class, our main line is to know that these problems are insoluble. For instance 598 died last year of hypothermia. This is not a social problem and governments can deal with this. Pollution is less than 50 years old. Capitalists have a vested interest in dealing with it. We should not allow the rug to be pulled from under us with these minor problems which have a media value. It is a short-sighted view on our part.

Coleman (Central Organiser): D'Arcy is giving totally false statistics and it is a grave error to say this is not a problem. His branch meeting last night on the falling pound - this is of less significance than people dying of the cold because they can't afford heat. We do show that problems can't be solved except by establishing socialism and that's the reason we talk about them.

TREASURER'S REPORT (including Financial Statement and Master Form 'C'):

B. Smith (Islington): Congratulated the Party Treasurer for the excellent and comprehensive report.

RESOLUTION 2(b) (Islington) - AMENDMENT (Manchester):

Lestor (Camden): Asked reason for use of word 'person' and not 'member'.

Islington delegate: Branch meant 'member'.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Branch has an item for discussion on the Agenda suggesting not a full-time HOA but two HOAs to run HO 5 days a week. We found it difficult to amend Islington's resolution. A full-time HOA would run into difficulties over salary, tax, insurance etc., two part-timers could run on expenses. Difficulty of no HOA available on Tuesday evening could be overcome. Branch thinks such members should have some clerical skills and office organisation. There was a report on a full-time HO Organiser and if the Party wants to appoint a committee to discuss this, the report could form basis of discussion.

McColl (Bournemouth): Would it be setting a precedent by employing a full-time member?

Lestor (Camden): Com. Turner and Com. Charlie Lestor had been so employed.

General Secretary: These were not for HO administration but for propaganda.

Waite (Camden): We would have to pay £7-8,000 a year, deduct tax etc. Why can't we have two volunteer members doing the job?

General Secretary: Should give this very careful consideration. Question of relationship between members and the EC as employer/employee. Even now paid HOA's are loath to do things voluntarily where previously they would, and want strict hours adhered to. Islington show an unawareness of what goes on at HO with regard to administration. Not necessary to have full-time member to put Party on the map. If our sub-committees strictly adhered to their terms of reference, liaison with the EC being the General Secretary, there would be no difficulty in co-ordination between them all. We require some highly trained personnel who can use skills in typing when the load gets heavy for the secretary and assistant, and for the sub-committees. We have now a second-hand offset litho machine and will need members who can work this. Bear in mind the work that is carried out and the kind of person you require.

Donnelly (Glasgow): Astonished Islington didn't get up and say what they mean

by this.

Begley (Islington): We feel voluntary effort is insufficient in this field and we need a full-time member who can do it. If not, we can get a non-member. It is for the work that is not getting done. We have the money - let's use it. A full-time person could work in full liaison with voluntary staff.

Coleman (Islington): Branch view was that the person should be a member of the Party.

Kilgallon (North East): Difficult to get information, the correct forms, EC Minutes etc. We feel this is due to fact there is not enough organisation at HO. We would like to see a full-time member doing the "dirty work" at HO not the political work. Other organisations have paid organisers - it's time we got a bit more professional.

Lestor (Camden): Resolution putting cart before the horse. Question is why do we not have members at HO able and willing to work as in the past? I know the answer - perhaps some of you others do as well.

General Secretary: Administration at HO is greater than it has ever been in the history of the Party. EC Minutes are approved and ready for dispatch on the same evening; has never been as quick in past. HO has quite a group of members on a Tuesday evening with committees busily engaged using all the equipment. Administration at HO at the moment in regard to previous administrations is second to none.

Hopwood (S.W. London): HO now costing £10 a day to run. Perhaps idea behind this resolution and our item for discussion is to get HO used every day. Perhaps if Com. Lestor came down one Tuesday she might be surprised.

Percy-Smith (Central): Would remind Com. Lestor a lot of members live a long way from HO and it's therefore impossible to get there. We should be looking to the future. Looking at our method of work now is not sufficient. We are hoping to expand our activity. If we wait until then we will be overwhelmed and will be unable to cope on an intervention basis. One full-time or two part-time is something for a sub- or ad-hoc committee to consider.

AMENDMENT (Manchester) CARRIED 18-10: SUB-RESOLUTION LOST 22-24

RESOLUTION 2(a) (S.W. London):

Hopwood (S.W. London/Ballot Committee): Supportive statements are inhibiting lots of people and don't appear to help anyone - we're still getting voting papers saying 'I can't vote for anyone else because I don't know them'. We expect members not to need information fed to them but to find out for themselves who to vote for. We're still small enough for this. Supportive statements don't say if people are able to take decisions: they say things which are not relevant. They cause a lot of work.

McColl (Bournemouth): How can we find out who to vote for when we live away from London? Apart from reading articles by particular people and analysing EC Minutes, it's very difficult to vote.

Edwards (W. London): It was suggested this would be helpful for members but this has not happened. We think the insistence that nominations must be accompanied should be dropped but if anyone wants to send some information they should do so.

Carr (Bournemouth): We're being told that numbers voting for the EC are going down and it's said there may be other reasons. We should have more information in the supportive statements - not scrap them.

C. Lovat (Lancaster): Does not know how people living in London can judge on this. If those outside London feel it helps those opinions should be given priority. Maybe it has not been given enough time. Some information is better than no information.

A. Bradley (S.W. London): We do take account of the feelings of members outside London. What seems to have emerged is that the brief information is not

sufficient for people to make their decisions.

D'Arcy (Camden): Branch opposed to the whole idea. Members are elected because somehow members do find out their capabilities. We've managed to find which people are suitable for jobs over 80 years. We nominated last year an official who had been doing a particular job but Branch would not go in for a supportive statement and Branch was told that the member would accept nomination from another branch. This is nonsense. One statement said someone had been a member for 30 years but I know they had been lapsed.

Easton (Islington): Branch in favour of supportive statements. Significant number of members outside London in favour. This may have to be looked at by a sub-committee. Also the numbers of ballot papers going down. We want all sorts of people on the EC, speakers, writers, administrators - a wide cross section of abilities and interests.

?Boyd/Floyd (Guildford): Don't see why you have to be a long-standing member to have information.

Donnelly (Glasgow): An ex-member of the EC says we have done this for 80 years and it has always worked. For some EC members it has not worked. Perhaps the nominee can say I am in favour of this or that or I think the Party should do that - rather than what we are getting now. Should try to get as much information as possible.

Goodman (EC): All London members should shut up and sit down. Even the members in London, if someone new stands, don't necessarily know them.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Pleased to note one Bournemouth member went right through EC Minutes - I would recommend that to other members. Main criticism of supportive statements is they don't give information required. No-one will say someone is no good. I lived in the provinces most of my life and I found out who people were. There's still scope for branches to send supportive statements if they wish.

RESOLUTION LOST 19-25

RESOLUTION 2(c) (Islington) - AMENDMENTS Edinburgh, Guildford, Swansea and Manchester:

Easton (Islington): In favour of an answering machine for years. Callers should be answered and told when someone will be available. Brief political statements would be one more medium of propaganda. Machines fairly cheap.

Rubin (Guildford): Brief political message could do more harm than good: could become too mechanical and dogmatic.

Bennett (Manchester): Any message would be too short or sufficiently long to annoy the person phoning and a nuisance to people putting in 10p coins. It should just be to record messages.

McColl (Bournemouth): Have personally found answering machine very useful - it means 24 hours a day a message can be left and acted upon. Pre-recorded message waste of time - people tend to put the phone down afterwards. Have phoned HO and when able to get through have waited for the person required to be found - it is quite expensive. Cost to the Party of a machine could be recouped by the saving of members phoning HO.

General Secretary: There was an Ad Hoc Committee in 1980 which recommended the Party going ahead with a machine for about £131. Still have this information. One reason against it is advertising the fact that the building is empty.

MANCHESTER AMENDMENT CARRIED 41-10; OTHER AMENDMENTS NOT TAKEN BY AGREEMENT

ISLINGTON SUB-RESOLUTION CARRIED 44-7

RESOLUTION 2(d) (Islington) - AMENDMENT S.W. London:

G. Slapper (Islington): A computer and word processor as technology constitutes

a greater leap forward than the typewriter from the pen. We are putting on disc names and addresses of branch members and sympathisers which makes mailing process much better. Considerably more advantages than this. Information recorded at high speed and you can recall the particular information required.

A. Bradley (S.W. London): Supported resolution but wanted to make it a bit more specific to encourage any members who work with computers or have knowledge, to put themselves forward for this committee.

McColl (Bournemouth): I have a computer and anyone is welcome to use it.

Powell (Islington): Could use computer for SS Subscribers administration. Party could administer accounts more readily. If we're going to have professional looking leaflets we will need professional equipment. With database we could have rapid access to, say, Conference decisions, and other information could be made available to members not at HO by means of additional equipment.

Lestor (Camden): Queried security aspect of computers where names and addresses of members are concerned who don't want this disclosed.

Chesham (EC): Computers can only be got into if connected with telephone network. Have looked into computerisation and can make information available to any committee set up. Advantages are fairly endless for a modest investment of, say, £3,000 or less. Should cut down time spent in looking after subscribers and will give impression of Party keeping up with 20th century.

G. Slapper (Islington): re access to Party information, it is probably as easy to break into HO. Only small space required for storage when information is on floppy discs.

AMENDMENT (S.W. London) CARRIED 40-13;

SUB-RESOLUTION (Islington) CARRIED 43-9

FRATERNAL GREETINGS from the SOCIALIST PARTY OF NEW ZEALAND were received.

RESOLUTION 2(e) (Islington) - AMENDMENTS Islington and Guildford:

A. Atkinson (Islington): Branch reconsidered certain aspects of the resolution as it was felt they were difficult from the legal point of view, but still for the spirit of the resolution. We now have a printer at HO, acquired quite cheaply and believe it will make a great difference to how things are done.

General Secretary pointed out that the Party has now acquired an offset litho machine through Com. Howell for £250 for which our photocopier will make plates. Com. Morgan is experienced in working this type of machine. EC felt we could use this as a pilot scheme. There is a need for sufficient members to learn to use it. Last week's EC Minutes were run off on this machine half an hour after the EC had approved them. We would have tried reprinting the Object and D of P pamphlet but then found we had 3,000 in stock. It is a viable machine and will enable the Party to look into this question and get some experience of printing.

J. Knight (Central): Queried possible advantages of registering a company and whether it would serve the Party and would there be problems in the financial world we would have to avoid?

B. Smith (Islington): We cannot be registered as a charity because we are a political party.

Donnelly (Glasgow): Suggestion is to look at any dodge we can use in relation to VAT etc. Nothing wrong in investigating this.

Goodman (EC): We're talking about investing a lot of money in hardware at HO. We should include in the investigations the increase of insurance at HO.

McColl (Bournemouth): It won't make much difference. Surprised at what some people are saying. This is progress.

B. Montague (WSP - Ireland): In this respect it would be a company limited by guarantee for the purpose of printing and would channel any money back into Party activity.

ISLINGTON AMENDMENT CARRIED 27-26
GUILDFORD AMENDMENT NOT TAKEN BY AGREEMENT
SUB-RESOLUTION (Islington) CARRIED 40-10

BALLOT COMMITTEE REPORT:

Hopwood (Ballot Committee): Are delegates happy about having a ballot for one name when a vacancy arises or could they suggest something for the guidance for the EC?

Easton (Islington): Of course we should have a ballot.

Davies (N.W. London): It could happen that all members would vote against the member - that's why we should have a ballot.

General Secretary: It was mooted on the EC that if you have 13 or so nominations and 9 elected and one resigned, you might go to the next highest on the ballot rather than call for another ballot with the unnecessary expense.

D'Arcy (Camden): This was the position until about 4 years ago but the rule was changed. What holds good for one member holds good for a dozen. This is an undemocratic suggestion. Sometimes a member resigns on a matter of principle and may stand again. This would rob them of that possibility.

CENTRAL BRANCH SECRETARY:

A. D'Arcy (N.W. London): How many CB members voted on the Conference Agenda?

G. Wood (C.B. Secretary): 32 papers returned - 187 sent out.

FORMS 'A' SCRUTINY COMMITTEE & ITEM FOR DISCUSSION 11 (Swansea):

H. Moss (Swansea): Branch disturbed recently both from a recent applicant to CB, and EC Minutes that perhaps the Forms 'A' Scrutiny Committee were looking too closely. In one case 13 of 15 questions were answered correctly but applicant did not distinguish between labour and labour power. This is sort of thing someone would learn after joining. Someone else who knew the Party well was not accepted by the committee on the question of the State, which would give quite a lot of members some trouble. This is not the sort of thoroughness which the branch would exercise - it would take into account that the applicant has been in touch for a while. Committee should use discretion and take this into account as well.

McLaughlan (Bolton): Why was the application from the prospective member not referred to Swansea branch knowing that the person had been in contact with members there and he could have joined the branch. It's a more satisfactory way of joining.

H. Cottis (E. London): We believed that the matter had been deferred not dismissed.

L. Cox (EC): Do we want the committee to give applicants an easy passage or because they are at distance from personal contact, find out depth of knowledge and commitment - do we want them to be more scrupulous on our behalf? A branch can exchange in discussion in the examination and matters clarified. Committee has very responsible job. If they were not strict you would come down on them for not protecting the Party, but I have been getting feeling from members that the committee could be a lot less strict on the grounds of getting applicant in the Party and sorting out anything afterwards - but it could be too late afterwards. There's not enough guidance to the committee.

Dale (Forms 'A' Scrutiny Committee): Flattering to find ourselves in centre of an Item for Discussion. We take place of the branch committee. There you talk to those who come along and when they are ready you ask them to take a test. We send a questionnaire. If there is any question, we take up the matter. This is not denying membership. We dare not pass a vague statement. We get people from

very isolated places and we have to be absolutely sure. We have had great help from groups in the past and we pay great attention to their opinion when we are informed of it. We do usually send applicants on to a branch and if we did not, it would have been an oversight, although some don't want to go through a branch.

P. Lawrence (EC): In recent case on the EC, the 15 questions covered a broad range of subjects and applicant had answered about 4/5ths satisfactorily but failed to satisfy the committee on difference between labour and labour power. EC felt they had been excessively cautious. Is it felt the EC were lax?

Dale (Cttee): We did not feel the EC were lax, but if it had been sent straight back to us instead of via the EC etc, it would have been dealt with much quicker.

SSPC:

Young (N.W. London): Asked what was the fate of the two articles he sent to the SSPC.

Critchfield (SSPC): One was rejected and returned; one just received and not yet dealt with.

RESOLUTION 1(a) (Islington):

B. Smith (Islington): Branch well aware that Rules 10 and 17 cover this but it is on the agenda as a reminder and to sound out how members feel about these rules. Most of us support idea of a newspaper being practical and possible. When we look at number of leaflets and distribution of circulars on various topics, we consider it an excellent idea. A weekly newspaper would help to implement Rule 25: independent of the SS, topical issues would be dealt with more speedily.

D'Arcy (Camden): Would this exclude a journal for local distribution?

B. Smith (Islington): Branch meant local or national.

RESOLUTION CARRIED 37-8

RESOLUTION 1(b) (Kensington) - AMENDMENTS ENFIELD & HARINGEY to Clause 1 and to Clause 2:

Critchfield (Kensington/SSPC): Referred to dispute in latter part of last year which has been noted in EC Minutes and various circulars. The roots go back further. The SSPC was set up in 1959. Previously 3 members formed the Editorial Committee which got other jobs organised amongst other members - recruited a secretary and someone who did illustrations, the printer did the layout. There was another post in the SSPC from 1959, never filled, for advertising and distribution. Party assumes that the 5 members work co-operatively. One layout member was an ex-professional journalist and co-operated well. Another layout member insisted he was free to get on with his job and the editors with theirs. He asked for changes in material and sometimes later found that the articles no longer existed. Com. Slapper's attitude was that he was appointed separately by the EC to do layout and design cover and the editors were appointed to do the editorial work and he did not necessarily have to co-operate with the editors. He changed his mind re the re-vamping of the SS. There is a genuine difficulty for the editors and the layout arising from the constitution of the SSPC. We found the 1956 Conference terms of reference obscure. Branch thinks it sensible for the EC to appoint 3 editors responsible for the written work and that if anyone has to be finally responsible for the SS it has to be the editors. It is not undemocratic - they are still appointed by the EC and responsible to the Party. Kensington's suggestion is flexible according to the manpower available and type of jobs which have to be done. Islington say we are trying to arrange

a hierarchy of responsibility and give out donkey work. No suggestion that members co-opted to the committee in any way inferior. Idea is to have a co-operative committee working in harmony. Not a personal matter.

Easton (Islington): If Enfield & Haringey amendments carried Islington resolution 1(c) might not come up. Seems to have been a degree of personal animus in this. Com. Slapper being accused of interfering in the SS. Because we have had bad layout members or lack of co-operation does not invalidate the present structure. Not logical that the editors have final say just because the written word is the most important and we could do without illustrations.

H. Walters (Islington): The way the committee is formulated tends to create a situation where you get this type of disaffection amongst the members and the way to ensure it isn't likely to happen in the future is to have a committee of 4 persons with overall responsibility for production of the SS, appointed by the EC with terms of reference formulated so as to get more overall co-operation between members. Might be better to have 3 experienced members as editorial members and an experienced layout member doing that but each side knows something about the other side. If Kensington resolution carried you'll have same kind of structure which caused the recent dissention.

K. Knight (N.W. London): How many of the small group of contributors ask that their material goes in unchanged?

Critchfield: None.

K. Knight: We are certain that if you appoint 3 editorial members and then find other people to assist and they make sensible suggestions to them, they will work co-operatively. We're not too happy about the editing of the SS - some articles contradict others. We want to tighten up the editorial responsibility.

A. Bradley (S.W. London): Importance of visual material in making the SS an effective journal. Noticed sudden improvement in impact in the journal in the 60's in imaginative material. Cover very important because that is what is on the bookstall or being held out for sale, and it makes a statement about what the Party is about. Layout very important to help reader find their way about, to gain information and follow articles. Layout and contents must work together.

Howell (Guildford): We cannot require that members appointed to a committee will agree. Anyone doing creative work will see it as a very important thing. A small committee will find it easier to agree and they will see that co-opted members will be those they will agree with.

Vanni (Glasgow): Will oppose all the amendments by Enfield & Haringey because if carried there would be possibility of layout and design clashing with the contents of the SS, and the editorial members would have no say on the layout. Layout member must be subject to the decisions of the whole editorial committee.

H. Moss (Swansea): Branch feel this was a personal dispute on which the Party should not spend too much time. Regardless of personalities you can't have the situation where the layout person has authority not to work with the editors if he doesn't feel like it. Those responsible for the SS should have authority for overall production. Problem is from the past, not just now and some kind of formalisation necessary.

Kilgallon (North East): Big red herring to say that written word more important than another part. Selling the SS, the first thing people see is the cover. Branch feels very strongly that the editors should have the say-so. Would like to see more writers also.

Young (N.W. London): Dubious about the efficacy of trying to make people socialists by comic cuts. Our case does not lend itself to these visual appeals - coloured covers do not make any difference. When there were no pictures on the front there were some penetrating articles. Better to entrust technical and professional work to professional people - anything we can pay someone to do to give us more time to put over the Party's case. Get rid of the layout man and

save space by not printing pictures. Not the responsibility of the SSPC but with the EC which in the past 12 months has been sadly lacking.
B. Smith (Islington): All SSPC members should be appointed by the EC and make no distinction between the layout/design member and the editors. Work cannot be judged unless the members have a free hand - it is a division of labour which should be respected.

P. Lawrence (EC): This could be resolved by democratic procedures. The dispute is in the division of responsibilities and guidelines in making a ruling on it is of delegated function. Question is whether they are different functions, and they must be different or you would not be talking about two functions. Therefore you give the willing person the job and the responsibility to carry it out. Not duties with no responsibility or decision-making. The layout person is subject to democratic control by the Party through the EC.

Chesham (EC): If Islington's and Com. Lawrence's ideas were accepted it would be a recipe for disaster. We are concerned about getting the SS out on time every month without fail. Kensington's resolution with all its warts is probably best formula for ensuring this. Particularly concerned about aspect not mentioned: the Party does not have managers. Don't baulk at the idea of managers. The EC manages the Party between Conferences - if you don't like us you get rid of us. First committee set up in August 1904 was called the Editorial and Management Committee.

Goodman (EC/Secretary, SSPC): Autonomy of layout member has been mentioned: no-one mentions the autonomy of the secretarial member. Obviously nonsense that I will decide whether to bother to type an article or not. Editors responsible for balance of the SS and by the way you feature this and what you put on the cover, you affect what is inside. I don't think I am a dogsbody - I do my job and help get the best SS we can. When a final decision has to be made it must be with the people who are responsible for the contents.

Gibbs (Enfield & Haringey): Layout is important - if affects how many SS are sold. Our idea was that the layout member is responsible to the EC which is responsible to the Party, and he must be allowed to do his job - not to say he won't be an integral part of the committee. If he was responsible to the editorial members he would not be able to carry out his responsibility to the Party as a whole. This is not denigrating the editorial members because he would be in communication with them. Slight difference between our amendments and Islington resolution because they extend it to the secretary.

Donnelly (Glasgow): Kensington's is the only workable proposition. I can understand the basic proposition that the layout man has got to be subservient to the editorial members - that's what has been in the past and we would have a hell of a problem if we changed this.

FLOOR RESOLUTION (Lancaster delegates) "That the vote be taken."

CARRIED 23-2

AMENDMENTS to Clause 1 (Enfield & Haringey) LOST 15-29

FLOOR RESOLUTION R. Critchfield (Kensington) and Hopwood (S.W. London):

"That the Enfield & Haringey Amendments be taken en bloc." CARRIED 28-2

AMENDMENTS to Clause 2 (Enfield & Haringey) LOST 15-29

Critchfield (Kensington): We cannot require people to agree and sometimes the editorial members do not agree. Not the intention of the resolution to consider a co-opted member as subsidiary. Layout extremely important and very much an individual job. Whole point is who is answerable to the EC and the Party for what goes in the SS both in text and appearance. I don't want to be a manager nor do the other editors. The members who do the work want to do this for the Party.

RESOLUTION 1(b) KENSINGTON - CARRIED 30-17

FLOOR RESOLUTION - G. Slapper and A. Atkinson (Islington): "That branches should endeavour to keep conference resolutions and amendments to resolutions as succinct as possible in order to avoid unnecessarily

protracted debating and voting at Conference."

G. Slapper (Islington): Self-explanatory: our time once a year is very precious.

FLOOR RESOLUTION CARRIED 26-0

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION 4 (E. London):

P. Deutz (E. London): Branch concerned that members' dues should be left at the present level and members subsidised by legacies. Easy to think that because of legacies we don't look at dues. Branch thinks we should automatically review dues each year in line with inflation. Better a small regular increase than a large increase. Branch noted rather more success in collecting dues in last year.

General Secretary: Treasurer is continuously keeping under review question of dues and dues collected have doubled since last year.

L. Cox (EC): Dues do come under review every time the first call goes out for Amendments to Rule for Conference.

P. Wilson (Treasurer): Good idea to keep an eye on dues and not allow inflation to overtake us.

RESOLUTION 3(a) (Glasgow) - AMENDMENTS Islington, Glasgow, Enfield & Haringey:

Donnelly (Glasgow): In Glasgow we are putting up photocopied posters and we need brightly coloured professional looking posters with space to put details. I accept that we are "The" Socialist Party. We want something concrete at this Conference so we can go back and say 'we got that done'.

Guildford: EC recently ordered 2,000 crown sized posters.

AMENDMENT (Enfield & Haringey) CARRIED 35-5

AMENDMENT (Glasgow) CARRIED 43-4

AMENDMENT (Islington) CARRIED 28-18

SUB-RESOLUTION (Glasgow) - CARRIED 43-4

RESOLUTION 3(b) (Glasgow) - AMENDMENT (Islington):

Donnelly (Glasgow): This would give us some sort of control over what we produce. We should have a simple litho press and we could produce these posters. A branch could telephone and ask for details to be printed on the posters and sent to them.

Howell (Guildford): A printer to produce A2 or double crown is not going to be cheap - even a second-hand machine would be £10,000+ and new machines this size cost tens of thousands, and it is the new type of machine which we would find easier to use. For that size there is no alternative to screen printing - a much cheaper operation but it needs a good deal more room - probably have to take over the literature room or balcony - for machine and storing equipment. Second-hand screen equipment probably about £1,000 - £2-3,000 new. It is a labour-intensive process and would need a team of people working on it.

B. Smith (Islington): Branch thinks "would" is an oversight, as the press would and could be used for other purposes.

A. Bradley (S.W. London): Branch opposed, not to the spirit of the resolution, but because we envisaged the kind of difficulties Com. Howell outlined.

Chesham (EC): You have already agreed that the EC make enquiries re printing facilities of its own. Now looking at printing facilities for double crown/A2. Where are you going to put this equipment? We are having to rearrange HO to accommodate the offset litho machine. You are talking about new premises - we don't have the physical space for this, nor the labour power.

Donnelly (Glasgow): Completely dispute what Com. Howell says about £10,000. Silk screen printers are not large - I got someone in the Party to make one and

I lived in a room and kitchen and used this. You are not using Clapham High Street.

AMENDMENT (Islington) CARRIED 32-18
SUB-RESOLUTION (Glasgow) CARRIED 30-20

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION 8 (E. London):

H. Cottis (E. London): Over the years Party has had legacies and it could be argued that the money went to good purpose but we feel we must think carefully and lay out how we shall spend this money towards making the Party better known. We could organise some massive exercise perhaps in the form of large-scale advertising. Some years ago this happened and a large volume of correspondence flowed into HQ. Not necessarily suggesting this but it is something to think of. Improving the Party's image and making a big impact. We should not pussyfoot around - it is uneconomical to hang on to large sums of money. These legacies are a great opportunity and we should take a chance. We should spend it in the best possible way to put the Party on the map.

Coleman (Islington): Pleased to see this on the agenda as it is this kind of attitude to propaganda we should be discussing at every conference. It is also vitally important in relation to every resolution this weekend. One has to be very careful of the danger of appearing to think there's an easy route - of buying impact on society. The only real impact we can make is out of the experience of the working class as a whole. Party has to have a much more overall view of a propaganda plan: we don't discuss that enough. Last year, the branch had a weekend where we tried to discuss and theorise about propaganda. Conference is something of a wasted opportunity on many occasions because we don't do this. We have to have a set of priorities on a principled basis, and be realistic about what we can do. We should be putting money into sustained activity in particular areas. We should get away from the idea of the spectacular impact - Trafalgar Square - a 'big meeting'. Party has to be realistic and mature about putting money into areas where members are plugging away month after month selling the SS, getting letters into the press, etc. It needs planning and a certain amount of trust in comrades. We are achieving a modest success, a steady rate of growth in response to sustained work.

McColl (Bournemouth): We had virtually no help except from Guildford. Now it is going well. If you see a branch forming, write and help. You might see Bournemouth double in size in next few months. Every night we're round the pubs, round the doors. Branches must co-ordinate their activities.

Hopwood (S.W. London): Sorry Bournemouth had problems when they started - surely the province of the Central Organiser to help.

L. Cox (EC): Implication of Cottis's advice is that we are not spending the money. In fact we are spending at the rate of £15,000 a year more than our income. It is spectacular spending on Party activity. It goes to branches and groups who are active and asking for funds. No stinting and some EC members get a bit trembly about such requests. We never refuse a request for a grant. At present rate, legacies will be consumed. That has to be weighed against grandiose schemes which might detract from normal but costly propaganda branches are engaged in.

H. Cottis You have to imagine being as successful as we can on the income we can get in but from time to time we have these legacies. It is support from the past: legacies are for doing something special.

SATURDAY:

FRATERNAL GREETINGS from the WSP (Ireland), four members from Belfast being present at Conference. The Chair also welcomed comrades from overseas - Com. A. Hart (Johannesburg) and Com. E. Fleischmann (Denmark).

Cox (EC): Would the General Secretary like to make a few comments on a recent bequest of a house in Derby, even if it does not strictly come within the year under review.

General Secretary: The EC had postponed circularising the Party until further information or suggestions were to hand. An SS subscriber who had recently died had left a house to the Party on condition that it was let, or even allowed to stand empty, for 15 years. If the Party does not accept it, it will go to Oxfam on the same conditions, and if they refuse, the Executors (the Bank) can offer it to whatever charity they wish. Suggestions are being looked into and branches will be informed, but meanwhile delegates can think about it and put this to their branches.

Easton (Islington): What would be wrong in letting it stand empty and how long have we got to decide?

Young (N.W. London): I hang my head in shame when I hear us discussing these things. We should be socialists and our legacy is not money but the culture and knowledge heritage of the founder members. All the money in the world won't make socialists. No substitute for the hard slow work of educating the workers.

Kilgallon (North East): We have to live in the real world. Branches like North East do rely heavily on subsidies from the Party in general. Activities we are involved in do need money.

Lestor (Camden): We had something like this 40 years ago and the attitude of the Party was that anything that was conditional was unacceptable.

Hart (EC): Conditions which the Party would not accept were what we did with the money.

Coleman (Islington): Delegates not in position to make judgment on this: we should take it back to branches very quickly. Would ask the EC to realise they are making a financial, not a moral, decision. Will it advance us as an organisation? We should see how it's best to get our hands on the money which someone wanted to go to the Party. Doesn't necessarily involve the Party becoming a landlord - there are other options. EC of course answerable to the Party if they abandon the opportunity of getting thousands of pounds in the Party funds on the grounds of moral principle.

J. D'Arcy (Camden): The man was a SS subscriber and at the end he couldn't tell the difference between the SPGB and Oxfam - in other words he was a Labourite. No point in applying idealistic principles, I agree. The principle was abrogated when you decided to go in for interest on bank account. Some of our friends who are heavily dependent on hand-outs from the Party - you would not get the money from the old EC that you get from this one. If the Party let property they become landlords, subject to Rent Acts etc. If it is empty you are liable for rates, repairs. I put a proposal to the General Secretary that the Party could try to sell the house with a restrictive covenant that the purchaser would have to let it for 15 years - not that we agree with this at all. Another idea is to lease it at a low rent and sell the lease but it would have to be gone into by solicitors. Otherwise, my advice would be that the Party abandon it.

General Secretary: Those suggestions are being looked into by a solicitor. I don't agree with the analysis of the subscriber. He originally made his Will to Oxfam and then read the SS and altered it. I saw the house from the outside, and through the window could be seen the SS on a chair. We will go into it and take into consideration the views expressed. The value of the house is put at about £18,000 and it requires certain repairs.

Coleman (Islington/Central Organiser): Most unfortunate that remarks about money belonging to the Party going to branches are referred to in this bank manager's attitude as hand-outs.

H. Cottis (E. London): We don't want to become landlords but I agree with Com. Atkinson about the man's wishes, but Com. D'Arcy may have shown us a way out of

the dilemma. Not first time we've had to deal with legacies and awkward situations.

P. Lawrence (EC): Another option is whether the premises could become a HQ of socialist activities in the Midlands.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE reported that Islington delegates were sitting without credentials which had been mislaid by their secretary.

RESOLUTION - H. Moss (Swansea) and H. Cottis (E. London) "That the delegates be permitted to sit." AGREED

IT WAS ALSO AGREED that delegates from the newly formed South Yorkshire Branch could sit but not vote on instructed resolutions.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION 5 (Kensington):

Critchfield (Kensington): Discussion not made easier with the experience of the past which was said to be a waste of time and disturbed existing distribution which relied on goodwill of members. Other possibilities in Com. Slapper's report though it has to be in a tentative way at present. If we are to get distribution via large chains we have to make some moves - to think of changing the SS and some moves have been made. Would like to hear what members think of them. Title could be arranged so it could be seen on a shelf in, say, Smith's - and titles of articles on front. Price would have to be thought of. Distributors would need their cut, and this would need an increased price. These sort of issues need to be discussed. Members who contribute would have to think a lot harder about what they write. They would have to be a bit more disciplined about their approach. We should not reject being involved in the world of distribution managers and accountants. It could be something of a breakthrough - it should be discussed seriously.

Coleman (Islington): How feasible in near future (2 years) is it that one of the more important distributors might take the SS and can he be more precise about the change of form and presentation of content?

Young (N.W. London): Personally speaking - more than surprised at some of the suggestions made to infiltrate the SS into newsagents. I cannot see how it will work. I object to 30p for the SS. I wonder how others can manage a larger magazine for 20p. I would resent attempt to foist the SS on people who don't have an interest in the questions discussed in it but are seduced by the cover. Stop thinking about glossy covers and spurious looks - concentrate on articles for ordinary workers - readable, short, concise and to the point.

D'Arcy (Camden): Depresses me that the Party never seems to learn anything. A few years ago Smith's used to handle the SS. It did not suit them or us. We learned that the distribution of the SS should never be out of our hands. You're looking in the wrong direction - it is not being sold because it is not a Socialist Standard, it does not have socialist information in it. A half-bred edition of Private Eye - everything and nothing. It does not state a unique point of view, is not a theoretical journal, and that's why it isn't increasing its circulation. Critchfield said members must be disciplined in what they write - does this mean they must be careful what they write or Smith's will not take it? I think that's what is meant.

G. Slapper (Islington): If attack is going to be personalised against those who write and produce the SS you can't help but look at person saying these things. Disappointed with quality of debate.

Edwards (W. London): SS today comparable with SS in past. Lower sales due to membership not going round selling as they used to do. People don't answer the door at night. We have to go into idea of commercial distribution.

Kilgallon (North East): If SS has all sorts of writing jumbled together people will say you can't produce a professional magazine.

Coleman (Islington): Personal view is that it's an activity problem. Branches

should
SS
copy

should look at ways to improve sales - appoint a sales officer. Appearance of SS is very professional and people buy it because of that. Recent covers not topical enough. Some members find recent change of print style more difficult to read - SSPC should reconsider this. If Camden delegate thinks SS does not contain any socialist content why is he not opposing the SS or forming a new journal or new party - you can't have it both ways, be in the Party accepting all the privileges and then say at Conference the SS doesn't contain anything that is socialist. I expect he means it doesn't put it the way he wants.

Carr (Bournemouth): Incomprehensible how anyone can say SS better 10 years ago. It is aimed today more at working class experience and problems.

P. Deutz (E. London): We have to explore every possibility including looking at organisations like Smith's. What is in it for Smith's? We can make changes in the SS to meet Smith's approval but report says it may not succeed. Look at any changes on their own merits.

Easton (Islington): Selling SS through Smith's won't mean toning down the SS. Don't think Smith's will care - if they can sell it they will. Argument has tended to contradict earlier discussion about visual impact.

Hopwood (S.W. London): I have confidence in selling the SS. Let branches who don't like selling it do something else. Some sales are pathetically small.

Begley (Islington): I'm proud to sell the SS, it's a very good journal. Some articles over people's heads.

C. Slapper (Commercial Distribution Agent): You have to look at way SS is being sold. Over 800 are subscribers. Special events, e.g. Tolpuddle, local shops. Will be seeing Smith's Marketing Manager again shortly and need to tell him which direction we are going in. We should gear ourselves to move in direction of commercial distribution. Pictorial parts of SS are part of it, not just thrown in afterwards. You can say a lot with a photo to convey political ideas. Lot of people open to our ideas. Conference should indicate how negotiations are to proceed.

Coleman (Islington): re Smith's distributing the SS in past - first I've heard of it.

D'Arcy (Camden): One or two Smith's branches used to take the SS.

J. Percy-Smith (Central): Congratulated SSPC on SS and endorsed change of presentation and style. People notice covers and are more willing to buy. Articles have to be highly relevant to workers' lives. We don't need tits and bums. Changes proposed for commercial distribution would probably make it more attractive to local shops too. We should take seriously what Smith's have to say.

C. Slapper (Comm. Dist. Agent): Smith's made clear that reason they did not take SS in past was not political. They'll take anything if they can make money out of it.

L. Cox (EC): Would Smith's agree to financial arrangement which would not require us to increase cover price to give them their normal return and to what extent would the Party agree to give them a subsidy in effect? I personally would be prepared to spend such money.

Critchfield (SSPC): We have to deal with matters of the day - things like hypothermia etc. D'Arcy thinks only a few hundred die of it each year but even if one person dies because they can't afford heat that is something the Party should have a comment on. If you don't like it you have to say you want us to deal with the Party's case in another way. An enormous untapped market for our kind of analysis of society. We could have people coming back to see what we think of particular things. If we adopt the D'Arcy attitude we are missing a lot of people interested in the Party's case and would be doing the Party a disservice. Illustrations can be a part of our case. I have been to meetings where speakers just roll out clichés. D'Arcy can be an effective propagandist but he chooses to close his eyes to reality. I can't remember, and I doubt that Smith's ever took the SS. If they did, how does this line up with D'Arcy's view

that it was then a good journal and he said the last thing Smith's would do would be to take a revolutionary journal? About discipline, I meant we would have to think what we are going to say and how to put it over. Writers will have to discipline themselves about length. D'Arcy not now amongst contributors though we have written asking him to write. New typeface will be discussed. Any changes should be for improvement. Any company taking the SS will want something out of it. We also get something out of it.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION 6 (Glasgow):

Vanni (Glasgow): Need for up-to-date index very relevant. Many SS don't have a summary of contents. Branch circulated the Party with a sample index for January and February this year and member concerned would be prepared to bring that index up-to-date and for as far back as is needed although I understand someone else has produced one.

B. Smith (Islington): This is essential and urgent - of great value and saves a lot of time. Parts of the index could be published regularly in the SS, say A-G one month and so on.

General Secretary: Com. G. Wood prepared an index for 1971-82 and passed it to the SSPC. It has been raised on the EC when bound volumes discussed. Member has done 1983 but decided not to continue.

Hopwood (S.W. London): The other index is with Com. Tenner. Needs people putting their heads together to sort it out.

Critchfield (SSPC): Index prepared by Com. Wood needed some cross referencing etc., though very valuable. A Birmingham Branch member produced an index on a computer which seems what we need and we think we can transfer Com. Wood's work and then keep it going from year to year.

NPC and ITEM FOR DISCUSSION 12 (Swansea):

D'Arcy (Camden): Asked position on draft Introductory pamphlet - EC seem to be taking long time and reading word for word.

General Secretary: EC still discussing it and NPC member attending those meetings.

D'Arcy (Camden): Noticed that EC proposing reprinting Historical Materialism and Principles and Policy pamphlets.

General Secretary: We discovered sufficient stocks of both so discontinued the idea.

Chesham (EC): On NPC report, EC concerned with way committee dealt with matter of draft Introductory pamphlet. EC has spent considerable time on this and are about halfway through. Concerned about the one-sided and distorted view NPC put in its circular giving impression that EC dragging its heels. Some minute details have been changed but that's not the main problem. EC had discretion on pamphlets this length - 10-18,000 words - and EC decided to vet it in accordance with practice of many years. Reading word for word does not take the time. We have other EC business and this has accumulated. Have held a special meeting. Need to get clear from the Party how EC is expected to deal with drafts like this. Member of NPC has been at the table and not conveyed their attitude direct.

Moss (Swansea/NPC): NPC felt they had been extremely restrained in circular and been balanced and objective. A lot of time has been spent on minor changes. EC has had pamphlet for 5 months and it seems it will take about a year. We had gone through it several times, EC members had a copy each and it's now being read out again. When something is read word for word you can pick it to pieces. Stylistic considerations come into it, which should not. EC said they made amendments to clarify and strengthen. Gave examples of single-word changes. Total failure on part of EC to see what their job is. We suggested a procedure

- EC members to have a copy of draft and send amendments to NPC who would send them back to the EC with their reactions. We decided Com. Deutz would not convey NPC's feelings but we would do this by circular.

Coleman (Islington): EC not a committee suited to editing pamphlets in principle. Tendency to get consumed with individual page and not whole pamphlet. You could say it doesn't mention Russia but do not not look ahead. Sub-committees should take up their arguments with the EC rather than first go to branches.

P. Deutz (E. London/NPC): I did make verbal objection to the EC that it was too slow a method - that there were 2 more pamphlets in the pipeline. Meetings at the EC have been perfectly friendly and co-operative and some members upset by the circular were trying to be particularly helpful. There are important changes to be made to the draft but others which are subjective and matter of opinion. E. London in favour of EC having last word on the pamphlet. It is in fact 250 words over the 10,000. If members read it off the table the EC could deal with a chapter at a time. EC has held a special meeting and also carried on late in the evening after considering the draft.

A. D'Arcy (N.W. London): Branch in favour of EC reading pamphlets short or long - 10 heads better than 3 and you may not be best judge of own work. EC should deal with it page by page, chair asking if any comments. Major alterations should be referred to NPC. Nice to be quick but better to get something out worthy of the Party.

C. Lovat (Lancaster): We felt it should not be read word by word as it destroys flow and content. EC should look at any possible error and prepare something beforehand.

D'Arcy (Camden): Same trouble when EC dealt with trade union pamphlet and dragging their feet. EC cannot resist adding to this - gilding the lily. EC decided to add 2 chapters to Questions of the Day. EC can deal with things quickly if they have a mind to. EC dealt with Q of D page by page, a chapter each evening and it took about 4 months.

Grant (EC): No question from my point of view of the draft being a very good working basis but it is in need of adjustment. Largest single amount of time wasted has been over the procedure EC decided of reading it out and taking proposals to adjust and on a number of occasions one or two EC members raised the procedure and it was debated half a dozen times at least. Actual reading time at EC table not significant, and on reading, aspects have come to light which did not come across when members read it to themselves.

C. Slapper (EC): Pity most present haven't been able to attend and hear what is going on. It was 3 occasions when procedure was discussed - total time a few minutes only. Time has been in dealing with the text in detail. You can't lay down guidelines for the way EC members implement the framework. EC should perhaps have shown more trust in NPC. Has taken 3 months to go through half the pamphlet. Some say this is too long. Some say every change has been essential. Copies of the draft available for delegates to see.

P. Lawrence: This is having an easy ride compared with how some pamphlets have been dealt with in past. EC members do feel a special responsibility in putting out pamphlets, which have always been held in high status as considered Party statements. You could change the procedure by overturning the floor resolution on pamphlets between 10-18,000, though I am not recommending it. NPC saying EC taking a negative attitude. EC gets a lot of drafts to deal with, mainly leaflets, and you have to answer why some drafts go through speedily - e.g. new Introductory Leaflet: dealt with in about 20 mins with a couple of small amendments; Guildford Branch leaflet on Racism: went through without a single change. Must be a comment on the draft itself, and I think there are some serious errors in it. I showed the draft to quite a few members and some of them did not agree with statements. Better to have the arguments settled at the EC table than after the pamphlet has been issued.

Young (N.W. London): Would never agree to anything going out from EC unless I had personally read it. No harm publishing a draft as a draft pamphlet subject to revision and editing.

Hart (EC): Draft was presented as a fairly finished product which could have gone straight to press after EC consideration. Therefore EC felt it must look carefully at it. Actual reading time amounts to 1½ hours. Proposed procedure not thought through - would be lot more work for each EC member to make written notes and no evidence to show saving of time. NPC would have to meet to discuss EC members' comments, write response and return these to the EC which would result in piles of paper and time for EC discussion. Unless Conference changes it, we're stuck with probably the best way of looking at pamphlets which EC are bound to vet.

Atkinson (General Secretary/EC): I am to some extent responsible for not calling special meetings, but EC members do work for a living. Also EC is working until about 11.15 p.m. Reason this is taking long time doesn't mean another pamphlet will take as long. As long as I've been on EC this is the way we have dealt with pamphlets. Hardy sat in on the T.U. pamphlet and was quite happy with the way it was dealt with even though it took 5 months.

L. Cox (EC): Even prior to NPC circular I was in favour of submitting our suggestions in writing. After discussion, however, it became obvious that this would not be quicker but involve more to-ing and fro-ing of paperwork and more comrades' time considering them all. It has been 1 to 1½ hours on the Tuesdays when we were able to consider the draft.

Howell (Guildford): Com. Lawrence showed me examples of the draft he felt were wrong but I felt they should be kept, but they were taken out. Some points could be said differently. Suggested procedure could be quicker.

Moss (Swansea/NPC): Com. Deutz did tell the EC we were not satisfied but EC not prepared to change procedure so we sent circular. We don't want to make personal attacks on EC but there needs to be some kind of procedure the EC is bound to follow. Pamphlet compiled by committee elected by EC which should have confidence in committee. EC has had draft 5 months not 3. I have shown text to people who have not found anything much wrong with it. It is subjective. EC should not be an editorial committee - should only correct points of principle. About half the EC never contribute to the Party in writing - are they competent to judge the work of writers. Is it that some texts have gone through quickly because they were not pamphlets with a high status? We do want EC to vet pamphlets but use sensible procedure. Would welcome any Conference resolution so we can carry on our work in reasonable way. 2 other pamphlets near completion on Racism and Women. Months to prepare and months to vet is dispiriting. Proposed procedure has been thought through thoroughly and would take a maximum of 5 or 6 weeks. If EC members had to write their comments and justify them they would be less likely to make so many amendments.

FLOOR RESOLUTION - R. Best and C. Lovat (Lancaster): "That the EC deals with pamphlet drafts submitted to it by the NPC in the following way. Individual members of the EC will, within 3 weeks of receiving copies of a draft, send amendments in writing to the NPC. The NPC will discuss those amendments and send its comments to the EC. The pamphlet will then be discussed and amended at the EC table on the basis of the written comments from EC members and the NPC's replies to those comments."

Best (Lancaster): Want branches to guide the EC on this. Don't want EC discussing punctuation or ideas thought up on the night. It would force EC members to think and not waste time. If it doesn't work, next ADM the EC and NPC can say so. Accept this and see if it does work.

C. Slapper (EC): If this is carried it could produce some argument on the EC as to how it applied to draft currently being considered.

Moss (NPC): Resolution establishes principle and would not be sensible to

change procedure on pamphlet being considered.

ADDENDUM - J. D'Arcy and Lestor (Camden): "but that the present draft should be proceeded with as expeditiously as possible under the present method."

AMENDMENT AGREED: SUB RESOLUTION CARRIED 28-2

REVIEW JOURNALS COMMITTEE:

In reply to a request, Com. H. Cottis, for the committee, gave further information.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE:

Howell (Guildford): Certain amount of confusion this year whether certain amendments should be included or not and some inconsistency. Seems correct to eliminate a number of amendments but Enfield & Haringey's amendments should also have been eliminated on same grounds. Committee should let us know on what grounds items should be eliminated to avoid confusion in future.

L. Cox (S.O. Committee): Committee concerned to obtain guidance re Enfield & Haringey amendments which some delegates felt were out of order. Committee felt these did not come within same area as the others.

SUNDAY:

TAPES COMMITTEE:

Easton (Islington): Do committee have a policy of recording as many public meetings as possible. Some good meetings have not been recorded.

H. Walters (Tapes Committee): Most recording done on individual members' machines - committee not in position to send someone to every meeting. Limited resources of machines - could do with another one which could be used by members attending specific meetings. Committee will be discussing this.

COMMITTEE ON PRODUCTION FOR USE:

P. Lawrence (Committee): (in reply to queries) This arose, as stated in covering notes with draft pamphlet, from Conference 1983 resolution, the draft to be made available for the widest possible consideration.

D'Arcy (Camden): Has this got special dispensation - not going through the usual machinery of the NPC?

May (N.W. London): Confusion because it is put out in form of draft pamphlet - it should be as draft texts which, if approved, would go back to the Production for Use Committee to go back to the NPC and back to the EC for approval. The majority of the delegates had read it.

P. Deutz (E. London): It has not been discussed in branch. It was a floor resolution passed at Conference - not an instructed resolution.

RESOLUTION 5(a) (E. London) - AMENDMENTS (Guildford and Swansea):

D. Deutz (E. London): Party has received 2 reports from Committee: one presented now makes the third. We noted great similarity between the reports and an article in the World Socialist No.1 "Food Production under Socialism" and there were lots of points we disagreed with. Reports were for Party to discuss and adopt so it seems wrong to publish articles which commit the Party to what hasn't been adopted. Don't want to get into details where we disagreed.

Coleman (Islington): Not good enough for delegate not to say what objections are.

Deutz: Did not like example of glasshouses, felt it was essentially conjecture. Can't see us going back into glasshouses to grow food. Another point - cutting down timber. Would not grow trees and not cut them down. Wood is replenishable - we'd use more wood not less. Standard of consumption of Europe is not standard for rest of world - one of health hazards today is over-consumption not under-consumption. We did not like prediction of 5 years to implement transformation of food production or 10 years to solve irrigation problems - no substantiation for these figures. 60% increase in food production - this is not a known factor. Such articles are a member's opinion.

Coleman: Article said this is what could happen, not what would happen.

R. Cox (Guildford): If resolution carried unamended we would be bound to restrict our comments on socialism to a bare skeleton model which would be a remote and abstract view of socialism.

H. Moss (Swansea): We did not think it true that the reports had not been discussed, they had, but had not been definitely adopted by the Party. All right to publish articles provided these were coulds and not woulds. E. London should have gone into more detail as to their objections.

H. Walters (Islington): Title of the article referred to is "How Socialism can increase Food Production". We are the only people who can draw conclusions because we have the right theory. You have first got to know what socialism will not be like to understand what it will be like. We have been consistently asked by questioners in every field what will happen under socialism. We have the only sound Marxist interpretation of how society develops - it is us who can make reasonable conclusions and that is what those concerned have done in producing a draft pamphlet and in making suggestions in an article. All kinds of conjectures in the SS and pamphlets. I have written articles I know many members would not support. Even if you might find minor faults the principle should be encouraged. Should come to a decision whether permissible to make suggestions which are not contrary to the D of P about what socialism will be like.

Easton (Islington): What would members objecting to the business of conjectures or conclusions say to those asking these questions? Resort to Young's position of not writing recipes for the cookshops of the future? Marx right to say this in his time as he had almost single-handedly constructed the theory and thought socialism was on the way. We're not in that position. We're an organisation which has discussion, members have certain expertise and I've heard nothing this morning to say that this is unalterable Party policy - that we would definitely build glasshouses and definitely not be burning wood etc. We have to think about these things.

McLennan (Manchester): In favour of amendments and against resolution. If we can't extend into the field of ideas of how socialism can organise production, we are doing a disservice to the socialist case. If E. London get their criticisms down on paper and get them into journals we could all discuss and educate ourselves along these lines. If we cannot talk on these lines we are sadly lacking in our propaganda.

May (N.W. London): My experience is that when people want to know how socialism will work they are not really interested in that - they do not accept the basic principle of the Party - common ownership, etc. Article in the World Socialist Journal said we would put up glasshouses. Most countries don't use glass but plastic because glass is too expensive. Glass not answer to the problem. Tunnels of plastic being used more. The article is committing us to this kind of thing. Re councils - we all have our views but are we certain it's going to be on these lines? Socialism would plant trees to replace those removed by farmers and also for use for timber for furniture, etc. Most people would not go near the land. Who lays down that these people will go into food production. These points could be basis for discussion but are they going to make people socialists? I don't think so. It's interesting but irrelevant.

A. Bradley (S.W. London): Branch could not disagree on principle of how the Party goes about publishing its statements and that any conjectural statements should be stated to be such. Surely in a socialist society the notion of expensive takes on an entirely different meaning - we would be talking about expenditure of natural resources and decision would rest on totally different considerations from the cost. Glasshouses was purely an example by the writer of something he knew about. I might have written about the production of clothing in socialist society because that's something I know about.

Davies (N.W. London): We should make clear to new members that we have always discussed any literature put forward by anyone and when we find fault with it we are perfectly right to do so. Nothing personal or nasty about this.

Speiss (S.W. London): Committee was asked to produce this pamphlet. Doesn't matter if we have glass or plastic. We only put a picture of the future as we see it now. Things have changed in our own time, the greatest use of wood is for paper. Each of us has our own idea. We spend more time fighting ourselves than we do fighting the enemy and that is the system we are against.

Goodman (EC): This shows how dangerous it is to make a conjecture without saying it is a conjecture. May is right that polythene being used not glass. May completely wrong when he says our job is to explain in technical terms. Years ago I talked to branches about socialism as a way of life. People are not first interested in the labour theory of value, but in a better way of living, and if we don't show that we have some idea of how we think it will work, they are not interested. We must say they are conjectures because we don't know what things will be like. It is very important and increasingly important part of our propaganda.

Edwards (W. London): Discussion has demonstrated the difficulties Party will have if it goes into these, because of the differences which have come out. I don't see why people should not conjecture.

Coleman (Islington): In answer to questioners we have to be very clear that we don't carry a system round in our pockets. We don't have some sort of utopia. First you have to ask what is their attitude to capitalism and are they in favour of socialism. One thing does not preclude the other. Statements have to arise out of material society. Work by the Committee has conformed with that method and not strayed into idealism. Danger if we talk too much about socialism we will be utopian. If we don't have something to say about socialism you become utopian - if you only ever talk about socialism as being in the future. Error some members make is discussing too much in relation to the forces of production and not in terms of consciousness. As world socialist movement grows you would have far more substantiated research, access to information. You could have trade union research departments looking at how they would transform their industries into production under socialism.

Skelton (Central): Main problem is as soon as you go beyond making the statement that when you get socialism you will be in a society with different relationships you are going to make statements which some people will be agreeable to and to others will be disagreeable and off-putting. Com. Lawrence solves problems with hierarchical councils. If you commit the Party to that sort of thing you are committing the Party to internal disagreements. You will make it more difficult to attract supporters from outside unless we make specific propositions about what socialism will be so that we attract massive amount of people on the basis of promises of what it will bring like other parties have promised. This is not what we should be doing. We should be focussing our propaganda on the change in social relationships not just because we would be producing more goodies. It may be possible but it may not be possible.

Fleischmann (Central): Welcomed Party publishing statements of this kind but do not want Party to be bound by them.

May (N.W. London): Did WSJ Committee feel they might be committing the Party to

conjectural statements?

Coleman (WSJ Committee): Com. Lawrence did not participate in editing this article nor did I participate in editing article I submitted. We want to publish articles which will stimulate discussion between socialists in different countries. If Conference wants to move a resolution that delegates in favour of any further such article being shown as a point of view from a socialist, the editors would see this as a positive move. Did not think it necessary to add footnote to this article.

P. Deutz (E. London): Branch not against making suggestions about how things might be, but bit worried that something more than that is being done. I was a member of Production for Use Committee whose report produced very useful discussion so am very much in favour of looking at how things might be. Branch concerned that discussion came up in last hour of a Conference and member of the committee moved a floor resolution. Only 600 members in this country - no reason why progress will continue at same rate, but we're numerically a long way from vast majority. There are tremendous ideas outside the Party of how things could be - people who know how they can solve their problems within capitalism that we know will not be properly done but we don't know what will happen between now and when we have a vast majority. Difference of opinion in branch as to what organisation will be like and concern we should not have this kind of soviet-style of organisation where one tier elects the next tier and so on.

SWANSEA AMENDMENT CARRIED 30-15

GUILDFORD AMENDMENT LOST 20-25

SUB-RESOLUTION (E. LONDON) CARRIED 31-21

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION 7 (S.W. London):

P. Lawrence (Production for Use Committee): Covering note explains how draft pamphlet arose (1983 Conference). The text is only tip of iceberg of work which has been done by a number of members. Reflects need felt by lot of members that we should have some practical proposals about how socialism will be organised and deal with existing problems. Nothing about conjectures or speculations and the word is not used in the reports or the draft - they are practical proposals. Conjectures relate to future society and implies a concept of socialism as some sort of futuristic society. That is an idealistic, utopian society and I am totally against it, but it is a view a lot of members hold. The basic proposals have been put forward by the Party in the past - in the 30's but in recent years the Party has neglected this work. We do have the best organised attack on capitalism in the political scene and the clearest analysis of existing problems. Some members say the sole task of the socialist movement is to attack capitalism. Our Object & Principles demand we take the matter further. Real questions coming forward when people ask what is meant by democratic organisation. Not good enough to say nothing. Socialism will never be on the serious political agenda until we are in position to put forward practical democratic proposals in answer to these questions. Got to get away from view of socialism as a future society by which time all problems will have been solved. Every problem today expresses conflict between what the forces of production could be doing and how they are held back by relationships of class society. We have to show practical ways these conflicts can be solved by socialism. We're talking about how the movement can grow. It is our duty to propose the ways in which existing problems can be solved.

G. Slapper (Islington): Endorsed Com. Lawrence's remarks. Necessary and healthy to publish provocative material which includes practical proposals. Credibility of the argument becomes very weak when socialism presented in abstract form and too much shying away from putting any practical proposals. Wrong to go too far and create a carte blanche for members to express willy nilly their views. Need

for coherent ideas. Need for constraint by various factors such as need for historical continuity - cannot be based on something idealistic. We could say at a later stage that research etc. had altered proposals.

D'Arcy (Camden): Covering notes with draft referred to 1939 SS article - we ought to hear how this was dealt with (quoted from SS). First part of reply said we would carry on with industry etc. with the elimination of capitalist features in co-operation ... Reply in SS did not say there would be the immediate abolition of the State. This is implied in draft proposal. It says changes would evolve from existing arrangements - if you immediately abolish the State you cannot evolve anything - you would be left with a vacuum. A number of things in the draft which have not been discussed at all - e.g. socialism would not need to use nuclear power or fossil fuels etc. Socialism would not be bound to select the most labour-efficient methods. If you go in for pre-planning this programme would take over the object of the Party and people would be more concerned with this than with the Party's case. Socialism is a very practical case and workers don't reject it because it is too theoretical - they don't understand need for it. No harm in speculation as long as you don't force speculation on the Party. Implicit in the discussion of the future is the criticism that the Party case is not strong enough.

Moss (Swansea): Branch decided that if Conference by floor resolution adopted the draft, it should go through the normal channels, i.e. that Conference can't approve the text in detail, but through the committee elected by the Party through the EC for this purpose. PFU can't ask for special treatment on grounds that Conference thought it a good idea to produce something. Content forms a good basis for a Party pamphlet but certain things need to be drawn to the attention of members - first re decentralised democracy. Party had not agreed on this in the 30's. Some things need to be modified. Time it would take before society could produce an abundance. It is a word we have used a lot. I don't go along with what May said about questioners: it is when they want socialism that people ask how it will work.

FLOOR RESOLUTION A. Bradley and F. Simpkins (S.W. London): "That this Conference recommends that the draft 'Socialism as a Practical Alternative' be submitted to the EC for editing by the NPC with a view to publication."

A. Bradley (S.W. London): This resolution is doing what Conference has just voted on - saying that the Party should discuss and adopt the reports on Production for Use in Socialism. The draft rests on the work started after 1983 Conference by 5 members, the report in 1984, the work of 3 members and the current report written by Com. P. Lawrence draws on the work of other people and the text, in the opinion of the branch, should be submitted to the EC for approval as a statement that the Party as a whole can endorse. Workers do understand the need for a better way of living. Draft outlines how society organised solely on basis of human need can be organised. Footnotes or sources of figures could be added so that members can check up.

May (N.W. London): Not my position just to attack capitalism - am doing meetings next month on 'Socialism - what it really means'. I think it's almost impossible to see this being published as a pamphlet under the name of the SPGB - in fact it is not mentioned in the pamphlet - it talks of the World Socialist Movement. Someone is going to ask what this is and it's going to be embarrassing to reply. Some specific points - says socialism would not use conveyor belts. I don't know what the views of members are on this issue. No majority view or it has not been expressed. Don't see how you're going to overcome these difficulties. This could be basis of a series of articles in the SS with suitable comment as the view of a member or group of members rather than commit ourselves on basis of what capitalism can produce at present. If socialism next year OK but this is not what seems to be. With existing pamphlets taking aspects of capitalism, there is unity and we all stand by

every comma. We may have to publicly disagree on the platform with such a pamphlet.

Davies (N.W. London): I see tomorrow as the future - so far as I am concerned, socialism is in the future. You have only got ideas of now and don't know what will happen in 10 years time. That is why in producing a pamphlet like this you have to be careful what you say. Party is not only discussing what socialism will be like now; in 50's we were doing this. I always discuss with people what socialism will be like. Not in principle against producing something like this but don't want any conjectures or views expressed to be binding.

[At this point the Birmingham delegate arrived and wished to sit but stated he has not been instructed by Branch. Delegates agreed he could sit but not vote on instructed resolutions.]

C. Lovat (Lancaster): There has been suggestion of some new element being introduced into the main body of socialist ideas. There is no suggestion whatever that the practical proposals being put forward are static or put in any way that is not constantly to be reviewed. We need to talk about these ideas as they are what concern people in their real lives. Would like to see draft go to be edited in the normal way.

Begley (Islington): Draft just short of being a masterpiece. It explodes the capitalist argument that the market is the most efficient way of regulating production. Endorse necessity for this type of propaganda and it should be implemented as quickly as possible. I joined Party for myself not for people in Ethiopia. Socialism is what people want now - not housing, car etc. Should give examples of why capitalism moves through boom etc. Good example is Hardy's article in World Socialist Journal.

D'Arcy (Camden): 32 countries use nuclear power: do we now renounce nuclear power and support the Labour Party's view that we get rid of it?

P. Deutz (E. London): If the ideas are put forward for consideration or otherwise we should consider these now. A great deal made of democratic control - well I'm concerned with the democracy now and we ought at least start in the Party and let us consider them now. I think this is a steamrolling way to get these through the Party. Resolution sends draft to the EC although the amendment [agreed to be incorporated in the resolution by the movers] sends it to the NPC first. We should have a little patience on this. Quite wrong for delegates to pass a floor resolution before branches have considered it and perhaps put a resolution next year.

Skelton (Central): Have not received a copy of draft and take strong exception to this. Can Com. Lawrence demonstrate these proposals answer the needs of a socialist society? We can't assume that issues of today and solutions to today's problems will be useful and relevant to the problems of a socialist society. Don't think Com. Lawrence is in the world of the present if he thinks socialism can be today. Must start with empirical facts. Must say we are assuming the conditions are much as they are today and the problems the same as today, but they may not be. We're assuming people's priorities in socialist society will be similar to today's. I don't know the answer to that one. This is where we have to be careful of the sort of documents we publish.

P. Lawrence: Socialism not answer to problems of the future - but a solution to problems that exist now. Lot of members forget the immediate framework in which the socialist arguments must be put forward and consign the question to some future society. Marx said the way you think about things has got to be related to the existing state of things. Some members think capitalism changes in all sorts of ways and that anything you say about it today will be wrong tomorrow, but this is not so. The nature of the capitalist state is not subject to day to day change. Re nuclear power, draft says socialism will be able to use a much wider range of choice without being governed by economic forces. If you don't like the illustration of nuclear power it can come out. In the 50's you had that terrible argument with members debating their personal preferences and

this discussion got nowhere. Big job to get 200 copies of the draft and standing arrangement has been that Central Branch members can request copies.

FLOOR RESOLUTION CARRIED 23-13

FLOOR RESOLUTION - B. Smith and Begley (Islington): "That the EC's Report to Conference be adopted." AGREED

Com. B. Montague of the World Socialist Party (Ireland) addressed Conference, as one of five members attending Conference.

RESOLUTION 4 (Islington) - AMENDMENTS (S.W. London):

B. Smith (Islington): The excellent and comprehensive report of the Treasurer shows that most months more copies of the SS are printed than sold. We should follow his advice and reduce the print-run and encourage our readers to subscribe.

A. Bradley (S.W. London): Branch felt it important to use the Party's money to produce the journal effectively and the resolution was too restrictive on the SSPC. We would delete the clause and not mandate them to produce a 20-page edition a few times a year. Similar line of thought on amendment to third point.

H. Walters (Islington): Party finances do not warrant reducing SS to 16 pages. We always try to produce our literature as cheaply as possible. EC resolution should be rescinded in relation to the 16 pages and continue to subsidise the SS. Always numbers of SS over at HO. Have to consider whether possible to cut down print-run or increase sales and we've gone through the rigmarole of commercial sales instead of trying to improve our own methods.

Davies (N.W. London): Opposed as EC have powers to rescind the resolution and arrange with the SSPC how many pages.

Donnelly (Glasgow): SS very important aspect of socialist propaganda and we should be prepared to pay for it and keep price as low as possible to keep one of the few avenues for getting our propaganda over.

AMENDMENT (S.W. London) LOST 23-26

AMENDMENT (S.W. London) LOST 19-21

RESOLUTION (Islington) CARRIED 29-2

RESOLUTION 5(b) (Islington)

Coleman (Islington): On agenda to reaffirm an attitude of the Party - an essential aspect of Party's position which I assume and hope vast majority would agree with. Some argument of way articles and propaganda are framed hinges on arguments relating to this. Extremely important propagandists bear in mind difference between opposing reformism and opposing reforms. Reformism is the assumption that the system of production for profit and its problems can be eradicated without eradicating capitalist system. We are hostile to those reformists. Are we opposed to reforms? Answer is no. There have been errors in Party over this. 1911 EC made clear distinction that we don't advocate reforms. A statement in 1977 had to be corrected. We do urge workers to achieve certain reforms of capitalism - in Questions of Day, re democratic facilities. An early SS recommended workers to strive for the vote. Qualification we make is 'when workers are advancing their own interest'. We are political party and have to answer question what is going to happen if minority of socialists elected to Parliament or local council. Traditional answer is they would decide in light of the advance of interest of working class. No essential difference, in practice, in opposing reformism and opposing reforms. There is no reform as a Party we're going to work for. A recent circular said 'the Socialist Party should not take up individual issues which come out of capitalism', all we can

do is reiterate socialist ideas and don't relate it to specific points. You have to start from point working class is at at the moment and move on to point we want to reach. If you present socialism as an ideal you cease to be a political party. Branch wants to hear if there is a clear argument against position we put forward.

D'Arcy (Camden): 1911 statement was minority of MPs would consider reforms in relation to the socialist objective. Re build-up of democratic institutions in backward countries (Q of D), we were seeing it from our point of view. Party not in business of reforms - opposing or supporting. Working class is at the point of complete confusion. We tell them they are wasting their time. We should not let other people determine the ground of our propaganda. We should not tag on to other people's issues.

Young (N.W. London): Coleman has cancelled himself out by saying there is no difference between reforms and reformism first and then saying there is. This has all come from the viewpoint of Camden on hypothermia but it is the old old question of immediate issues - the meantime. If we take up these issues we are simply following them and take these up to gain the ear of people. D'Arcy has said when the capitalists know people are dying, institute reforms. We don't support and we don't oppose reforms. It doesn't make any difference. We will get reforms because it's in the interest of keeping the workers confused. If you go into it with object of using it as a vehicle, a lever - once you do that you commit yourself to reformist propaganda.

Donnelly (Glasgow): A minority of socialist delegates would vote on the merits of a reform. We're not only socialists, we're members of the working class. Very little of what goes on in the Gas-house is to do with the working class but some is. It would be a strange SS that didn't mention hospitals being closed or thousands dying of hypothermia - it is an aspect of the poverty problem. Young says if there's a problem the capitalist class will solve it but no reformist government has done anything to abolish poverty. If we withdraw from these subjects we would no longer be a revolutionary party.

P. Deutz (E. London): Rather sad the same reform issues are about now as when Party was formed. I see this item as a kind of Aunt Sally put up by Islington. Starting point of propaganda is some existing problem but in giving information we aim for as much accuracy as possible. Problem is to know how much hypothermia there is. We do nothing for our case if we give inaccurate figures. We should all be aware that official figures can understate the figure. We don't need to exaggerate - it's appalling anyway.

R. Best (Lancaster): Branch takes view that reforms are legal changes by the state of capitalism, but they can negate the bad effects of capitalism. 2 types of reform concerned with the distribution within capitalism and second type we are interested in - the ability of the working class to have trade unions - access to state power through the democratic process. We would advocate workers trying to gain democracy and free trade unions but not by supporting reformist parties, and I would say we do see the difference between reformism and reform.

Carr (Bournemouth): On agenda as there seem to be misunderstandings. Some delegates think those putting forward the resolution support reformism. We can't raise working class socialist consciousness by walking away from them. On question of democracy and dictatorship, you have got to get rid of dictatorship.

Knight (N.W. London): Islington delegate said the SP must work for what is the benefit of the working class and that there were certain reforms we must pay attention to, i.e. democracy. Look historically - all reforms through the British parliament are to make British capitalism work more efficiently, no other reason; some crumbs for the workers. You immediately get allied with other people interested in the same thing and where does your hostility clause go then. Look at history of organisations aiming for democracy who attain their end and don't go any further. Best way to advocate democracy is to advocate

socialism.

Kilgallon (North East): We want to talk about the real world - the fact that there is hypothermia, poverty - and talk about socialism as a practical alternative to these problems - or make the SP a debating club and boost our own egos and self-esteem. There are sections of this party who are not interested in making socialists.

Coleman (Islington): Glasgow Branch got the point very clearly. We have had the statement from Camden delegate that if the capitalist class want to they can start to get rid of these problems in capitalism. This is nonsense. They cannot stop people dying of the cold. It is a kind of Aunt Sally because I wanted to find out who disagrees with this. Young's contribution was based on confusion. I said the SP cannot exist as an organisation that as a matter of principle opposes reforms. We start from the experience of the working class, not their ideas. Capitalism determines the ground for our propaganda - makes people die of cold etc. Those branches running meetings on Marx - even on Jenny Marx - and others running meetings on war, having debates etc., see who is making more socialists. You can say Islington makes socialists but not real ones - brought in on funny issues - should face up to reality and see this is not just a theoretical item, it is a vital question of how you relate to the working class in the one relationship we want to be in to them and that is so that is with an open door saying Socialists Welcome - and them coming in.

RESOLUTION 5(b) (Islington) CARRIED 42-7

DELEGATES THEN GAVE VERBAL BRANCH REPORTS as follows: Birmingham, Bolton, Bournemouth, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lancaster, Manchester, North East, South Yorks, Camden, Swansea, E. London, Guildford, Islington, Kensington, N.W. London, S.W. London.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION 18 (Camden):

D'Arcy (Camden): We think this is a fundamental proposition which is creeping into the Party and that is the abolition of the state. Last Conference resolution about the immediate abolition of the state and it has appeared in the SS and in relation to the miners. We say there is a contradiction between the Party's position which lays down that we shall use the machinery of government as an agent of emancipation for the transitional purpose of transferring society from private ownership to common ownership. EC has introduced 2 objectives - that the Party is in favour of socialism but coupled it with the abolition of the state. Intention in our view is to try to broaden the appeal of the Party to those outside but who are in favour of the abolition of the state. To talk about the abolition of the state when the miners were being clobbered carried the implication that people should be in favour of the Party's case because we were going to get rid of the state. A travesty of the Party's position. We will use machinery of government to strip capitalists and after - not before - the state will go. Utterly opposed to the use of this phrase. Now it is incorporated in the pamphlet you have just discussed. It is an invitation to anarchists and others who don't accept our point of view.

Young (N.W. London): Read statement endorsed by the Branch. Last year's Conference resolution in contradiction to the 1977 EC statement. Marx said main difference between socialists and anarchists is that anarchists advocate the immediate abolition of the state.

Coleman (Islington): Have never heard such nonsense in the SPGB. Appalling that these branches did not put this as a resolution. Do other members of the Branch not agree with Young and humour him by putting it on. It is a confused, anti-socialist position. Conference last year voted because of a leaflet with a Leninist attitude. There will not be a socialist state. If you understand the function of the state as a coercive class body we have to get control of it to

create classless society which will abolish the state immediately. Branches allowing members to say this should take action to educate them or expel them.

H. Walters (Islington): Controversy going on for years since the so-called revolution in Russia. Most important pre-requisite for establishment of socialism was for a majority of the working class to become socialist to capture power. It therefore follows that there has to be a big increase of socialists within the framework of capitalism. To embark on a transitional period makes utter nonsense of the whole concept of a quantitative increase in socialist consciousness, resulting in the abolition of capitalism, which means the abolition of the state, as distinct from the state machinery. If you're going to advocate piecemeal dismantling of the state it's like advocating witch-burning by degrees. With the abolition of the GLC, one night the GLC area will be administered by the GLC but people will wake up in the morning administered by a tuppenny-halfpenny local council. This is one of the things that is going to happen overnight and you can draw conclusions of what will happen with the abolition of capitalism.

May (N.W. London): Islington statement says the instrument of class domination - the state - will go immediately. I endorse that but last year you were arguing the administrative effects of the state machine you said we must keep - fire engines, ambulances. The coercive aspects will be abolished immediately. I say that is in contradiction to many things the Party has written. The pamphlet ITWWI refers to a minority trying to defend... and infers that after the establishment of socialism some form of defence machinery will be retained to deal with any violent minority. How can this be reconciled with the resolution last year. Creates some difficulties if an applicant envisages some form of this and applicant not accepted. In another branch a different view taken by the applicant would be accepted.

Skelton (Central): Object very strongly to statement passed last Conference basically because it was ambiguous. Unless you use political power you aren't going to get rid of capitalist class and get socialism.

Easton (Islington): We want to get a few terminological and conceptual things right. The state is not the fire service, meals on wheels - the only essential features of the state are the coercive machinery. The state can take on board practically anything it likes. It used to run the telephones, but no longer does. Its only essential needs are the army, police, legislative bodies. Possible the word 'immediate' has caused a lot of confusion. Implies there is no middle period and this is perfectly consistent with the Party's position. Gradual decline is utter nonsense.

Speiss (S.W. London): Minority need the state now because there are only a few of them.

D'Arcy (Camden): Will there be a state in a socialist society? Answer is no. We are discussing the transitional role of the state from the process of private ownership to the establishment of common ownership. Will use the machinery of government as the machinery of emancipation to compel the capitalists to make sure a democratic will of the majority will succeed... In my view it will not be necessary to abolish the state - because its sustenance has gone it will disappear.

FLOOR RESOLUTION - Kilgallon (North East) and Coleman (Islington):

"In view of the matter for discussion Item 18 and Rule 25, this Conference recommends that a Special Meeting be called on a date to be arranged, to discuss this fully." CARRIED 23-7

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED at 6 p.m.

General Secretary

May 1985